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Battles of Talavera - 1810

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THE
BATTLES
OF
TALavera.
A
POEM.

".....Sibi, cognomen in hoste
"Fecit; et Hispanam sanguine tinxit humum."
Ov. Fast. 6.

SIXTH EDITION,
CORRECTED, WITH SOME ADDITIONS.

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May 4, 1927

By John Wilson Croker

THE
BATTLES
OF
TALAVERA.

*Dicam insigne, retens, adhuc
Indictum ore alio.*

I.

'T WAS dark ; from every mountain head
The sunny smile of heaven had fled,
And evening, over hill and dale
Dropt, with the dew, her shadowy veil ;
In fabled Teïo's darkening tide
Was quenched the golden ray ;
Silent, the silent stream beside,
Three gallant people's hope and pride,
Three gallant armies lay.

B

Welcome to them the clouds of night,
 That close a fierce and hurried fight ;—
 And wearied all, and none elate,
 With equal hope and doubt, they wait
 A fiercer bloodier day.

France, every nation's foe, is there,
 And Albion's sons her red cross bear,
 With Spain's young Liberty to share,
 The fortune of the fray.

II.

Ranged on Alberche's hither sands,
 He of the borrowed crown commands
 France's fraternal might ;
 While Talavera's wall between
 And olive groves and gardens green,
 Spain quarters on the right ;
 Thence to where hills o'erlook the plain,
 The British bands the left maintain,

Fronting the east, as if to gain

The earliest glimpse of light,

There while they wait the anxious morn,

Hark ! on the midnight breeze are borne

Sounds from the vale below.

What sounds ? No gleam of arms they see,

Yet still they hear—what may it be ?

It is, it is the foe !

Down, down the hill and thro' the shade,

With ball and bayonet and blade,

They charge them home ;—that charge has laid

Full many a Frenchman low !

III.

Thrice came they on, and thrice their shock

Rebounding breaks, as from the rock

The wintery billow's thrown ;

And many a gallant feat is done,

And many a laurel lost and won,

Unwitnessed and unknown ;

Feats that atchieved in face of day,
 In Peter's holy aisle, for aye
 Had lived in sculptur'd stone.
 Oh, for a blaze from heaven to light
 The wonders of that gloomy fight
 The guerdon to bestow,
 Of which the sullen envious night
 Bereaves the warrior's brow !
 Darkling they fight, and only know
 If chance has sped the fatal blow,
 Or, by the trodden corse below,
 Or by the dying groan :
 Furious they strike without a mark,
 Save now and then the sulphurous spark
 Illumes some visage grim and dark,
 That with the flash is gone !

IV.

Promiscuous death around they send,
 Foe falls by foe, and friend by friend,

Heaped in that narrow plain.
 But, with the dawn, the victors view
 Ten gallant French the valley strew
 For every Briton slain :
 They view with not unmingled pride—
 Some anxious thoughts their souls divide,
 Their throbbing hopes restrain,
 A fiercer field must yet be tried,
 Hundreds of foes they see have died,
 But thousands still remain.
 From the hill summit they behold,
 Tipped with the morning's orient gold,
 And swarming o'er the field,
 Full fifty thousand muskets bright,
 Led by old warriors trained to fight
 And all in conquest skilled :
 With twice their number doomed to try
 The unequal war, brave souls ! they cry,
 " Conquer we may, perhaps must die,
 " But never, never yield."

V.

Thus ardent they: but who can tell,
In Wellesley's heart what passions swell,
What cares must agitate his mind,
What wishes, doubts and hopes combined,
Whom with his country's chosen bands,
'Midst cold allies, in foreign lands,
 Outnumb'ring foes surround ;
From whom that country's jealous call,
Demands the blood, the fame of all ;
To whom 'twere not enough to fall,
 Unless with victory crowned.
Oh heart of honour, soul of fire,
Even at that moment fierce and dire,
 Thy agony of fame !
When Britain's fortune dubious hung,
And France tremendous swept along,
 In tides of blood and flame :
Even while thy genius and thy arm
Retrieved the day and turned the storm,

Even at that moment, factious spite,
 And envious fraud essayed to blight
 The honours of thy name.

VI.

He thinks not of them :—from that height
 He views the scene of future fight,
 And, silent and serene, surveys
 Down to the plain where Teïo stays,
 The woods, the streams, the mountain ways,
 Each dell and sylvan hold :
 And all his gallant chiefs around
 Observant watch, where o'er the ground
 His eagle glance has rolled.
 Few words he spake, or needed they,
 Where to condense the loose array,
 Or where the line unfold :
 They saw, they felt, what he would say,
 And the best order of that day,
 It was his eye that told.

Prophetic, to each chief he shows,

On wing or center, where the foes

Will pour their fury most

Points out what portion of the field

To their advance 'twere good to yield,

And what must not be lost.

' Away, away ! the adverse power

' Marshals, and moves his host.

' 'Tis come, 'tis come, the trial hour,

' Each to his destined post.

' And when you charge, be this your cry,

' Britons strike home, and win or die,—

' The grave or victory !'

VII.

And is it now a goodly sight,

Or dreadful to behold,

The pomp of that approaching fight ?—

Waving ensigns, pennons light,

And gleaming blades and bayonets bright,

And eagles winged with gold ;—
 And warrior bands of many a hue,
 Scarlet and white and green and blue,
 Like rainbows, o'er the morning dew,
 Their varied lines unfold :—
 While cymbal clang and trumpet strain,
 The knell of battle toll'd ;
 And trampling squadrons beat the plain,
 'Till the clouds echoed back again,
 As if the thunder rolled.

VIII.

Soon, soon must vanish that array,
 Those varied colours fade away,
 And eagle bright and pennon gay,
 With bloody dust be soiled ;
 Soon, soon be hushed in various death,
 The cymbal's clang, the trumpet's breath,
 And shouts of warriors wild.

Thousands shall fall of every force,
 English and French, and foot and horse,
 In mingled carnage piled.

And distant lands shall share the woe,
 Nor Teio's stream alone shall flow,

 With this day's grief defiled.—

On Severn's banks, and Loire's and Rhine's
 Full many a weeping victim pines,
 And longs, the news it dreads, to hear,
 And trembles and desires—

Wives for their husbands, pray and fear,
 And parents for their children dear,

 And children for their sires :

Long shall they pine, and fear, and pray—
 Many are doomed to death to-day,
 Whose fate shall ne'er at home be told ;
 Whose very names the grave shall fold,
 Many, for whose return in vain
 The wistful eye of love shall strain,

In vain, parental fondness sigh,
 And filial sorrow mourn—
 On Talavera's plain they lie,
 No! never to return!

IX.

But, tyrant, thou, the cause of all
 The blood that streams, the tears that fall;
 Who by no faith or fear confin'd,
 In impious triumph o'er mankind
 Thy desolating course hast driven,
 Bursting the sacred ties that bind
 Man to his fellow and to heaven:
 Thou of the iron hand and heart,
 All great and guilty as thou art,
 Thou yet shalt feel the vengeance due
 To him who swears but to betray,
 Who never aids but to undo,
 And only smiles to slay!

In thy last hour of parting pain,
 The parents', widow's, orphan's moan,
 The shrieking of the battle plain,
 The murdered prisoners' midnight groan,
 Shall harrow up thy brain ;
 Millions by thee untimely slain,
 Thou peopler of the tomb,
 Shall rise upon thy frensied view—
 See, D'Engbien leads the shadowy crew,
 And stern and silent 'midst their cries,
 Shakes the curst torches in thine eyes
 That lighted to his doom !

X.

Yet, ere that hour, there's vengeance still,
 And Talavera's stubborn hill
 Shall cost thee many a pang
 Of anxious fear and wounded pride ;
 Tho' over half the world beside,

Thy chains of conquest clang,
 Tho' empires at thy footstool cower,
 Still Spain and England brave thy power;
 In faith and victory knit, they shroud
 Thy fame, and with a thunder cloud,
 Thy destiny o'erhang !

XI.

Yes, ere that hour, there's vengeance still—
 For now towards Talavera's hill
 The Gallic columns haste;
 The same they are, and led by those,
 The scourges of the world's repose,
 Victors of Milan's fair domain,
 Of Austerlitz's wintery plain,
 And Friedland's dreary waste :
 Who Prussia's shivered sceptre hurl'd
 Down to the earth, and from the world
 Her very name erased :

Who boast them, in presumptuous tone,
 Each feat and fortune to have known
 Of war, except defeat alone ;

But now of that to taste !
 For Him, long tried in battle storms,
 Him, who in Ind's unequal war,
 Scattered, like dust, the sable swarms
 Of Scindiah and Berar ;
 Him, conqueror still where'er he turns,
 Whether on Zealand's frozen reign,
 Or where the sultry summer burns
 Vimero's Lusitanian plain ;
 Who, from his tyrant station shook,
 With grasp of steel, Abrantes' Duke ;
 Who, from old Douro's rescued side,
 Dispersed Dalmatia's upstart pride ;
 Him, not Sebastiani's wile,
 Nor practised Jourdan's veteran fame,
 Nor Victor ! thy portentous name
 In this day's fight shall foil.

XII.

Valiant tho' vain, tho' boastful wise,
Marshalls, and Dukes ! with skilful eyes

 You view the adverse line.

And well your prudent councils weigh
The eventful danger of that day,
Where Wellesley's star's terrific ray,

 And Britain's red-cross shine.

And while they shine, tho' you should foil
The Spanish spear, 'twere fruitless toil—

 Not half a victory !

Nothing is done, 'till Britain's spoil

 On France's crest you see.

Full then on her the torrent course
Of battle drive, and all your force,

 Your universal train

Expend on her, and her alone,

Be the whole gathered storm her own,

Her peril and her pain !
 Press her with growing thousands round,
 Dash that red banner to the ground.
 And seal the fate of Spain !

XIII.

Now from the dark artillery broke
 Lightning flash and thunder stroke ;
 And volumed clouds of fiery smoke
 Roll in the darkened air :
 Wrapped in its shade, unheard, unseen,
 Artful surprise, and onset keen,
 The nimble French prepare.
 On the united line they throw
 Their wide extended host,
 Center and left and right, nor show
 What point they threaten most.
 But Wellesley undeceived, the brunt
 Of war, expects on Britain's front,

But strengthens most the vaward ranks
 That hang along the mountain banks,
 For well he judges, Gallia still
 Is bent to seize that bloodstained hill,
 Strain all her force, exhaust her skill,

To plant her eagles there ;
 That soon, from that commanding height
 May speed their devastating flight,
 And, sweeping o'er the scattered plain,
 The hopes of England and of Spain.
 With iron talon tear.

XIV.

Three columns of the flower of France,
 With rapid step and firm, advance,
 At first thro' tangled ground,
 O'er fence and dell and deep ravine—
 At length they reach the level green,
 The midnight battle's murderous scene,

The valley's eastern bound.
 There in a rapid line they form,
 Thence are just rushing to the storm
 By bold Belluno led,
 When sudden thunders shake the vale,
 Day seems, as in eclipse, to fail,
 The light of heaven is fled ;
 A dusty whirlwind rides the sky,
 A living tempest rushes by
 With deafening clang and tread—
 ' A charge, a charge,' the British cry,
 ' And Seymour at its head.'

XV.

Belluno sees the coming storm,
 And feels the instant need.
 ' Break up the line, the column form,
 ' And break and form with speed,
 ' Or under Britain's thundering arm
 ' In rout and ruin bleed.'

Quick, as the haste of his commands,
 The lengthened lines are gone,
 And broken into nimble bands
 Across the plain they run ;
 ‘ Spur, Britain, spur thy foaming horse,
 ‘ O’ertake them in their scattered course
 ‘ And sweep them from the land !’
 She spurs, she flies ; in vain, in vain—
 Already they have passed the plain,
 And now the broken ground they gain,
 And now, a column, stand !
 ‘ Rein up thy courser, Britain, rein !’—
 But who the tempest can restrain ?
 The mountain flood command ?
 Down the ravine, with hideous crash,
 Headlong the foremost squadrons dash,
 And many a soldier, many a steed
 Crushed in the dire confusion bleed.
 The rest, as ruin fills the trench,
 Pass clear, and on the columned French,

A broken and tumultuous throng
 With glorious rashness dash along,
 Too prodigal of life ;
 And they had died, aye every one,
 But Wellesley cries, ' On, Anson, on,
 ' Langworth, and Albuquerque and Payne,
 ' Lead Britain, Hanover, and Spain,
 ' And turn th' unequal strife.'

XVI.

Now from the plain and every steep
 A thousand thunders peal ;
 Again the vollied tempests sweep,
 And sulphury vapours dark and deep
 The meeting armies veil ;
 The kindling fight at every post
 Blazes, but towards the centre most,
 Whence, hoping on a happier stage,
 The renovated war to wage,
 France now assails the hill,

And pours with aggregated rage
 The storm of fire and steel ;
 And when the freshening breezes broke
 A chasm in the volumed smoke,
 Busy and black was seen to wave
 The iron harvest of the field,—
 That harvest, which, in slaughter tilled,
 Is gathered in the grave :—
 And now before their mutual fires
 They yield, and now advance ;
 And now 'tis Britain that retires,
 And now the line of France :
 They struggle long with changeful fate,
 And all the battle's various cries
 Now depressed, and now elate,
 In mingled clamours rise ;
 Till France at length before the weight
 Of British onset flies :
 ' Forward,' the fiery victors shout,
 ' Forward, the enemy's in rout,
 ' Pursue him and he dies ! '

XVII.

Hot and impetuous they pursued,
And wild with carnage, drunk with blood,
 Rushed on the plain below ;
The wily Frenchman saw and stood—
Screened by the verges of the wood
 He turned him on the foe.
The gallant bands that guard the crown
Of England, led the battle down,
 And in their furious mood
Thrice they essayed with onset fierce,
Thrice failed, collected France to pierce—
 Still France collected, stood.
While full on each uncovered flank
Cannon and mortar swept their rank,
And many a generous Briton sank
 Before the dreadful blaze ;
Yet 'midst that dreadful blaze and din
 Their fearless shout they raise,

And ever, as their numbers thin,
 Fresh spirits, to the post, rush in
 Of peril and of praise.
 And still as with a blacker shade
 Fortune obscures the day ;
 Commingled thro' the fight they wade,
 And hand to hand and blade to blade
 Their blind and furious efforts braid,
 As if, still dark and disarrayed,
 They fought the midnight fray.

XVIII.

In vain.—New hopes and fresher force
 Inspirit France, and urge her course,
 A torrent rapid wild and hoarse,
 On Briton's wavering train.
 As when, before the wintery skies,
 The struggling forests sink and rise,
 And rise and sink again,
 While the gale scatters as it flies
 Their ruins o'er the plain ;

Before the tempest of her foes,
 So England sank, and England rose,
 And, tho' still rooted in the vale,
 Strewed her rent branches on the gale.
 Then, Wellesley ! on thy tortured thought

What honest anguish crost !

Oh how thy generous bosom burned,
 To see even by a glorious fault
 The flowing tide of victory turned,

And Spain and England lost !—

Lost, but that as the peril great,
 And rising on the storms of fate

His rapid genius soars,

Sees, at a glance, his whole resource,
 Drains from each stronger point its force,

And on the weaker pours :

Present where'er his soldiers bleed,

He rushes thro' the fray,

And, so the dangerous chances need,
 In high emprise and desperate deed,
 Squanders himself away !

XIX.

Now from the summit, at his call,

A gallant legion firm and slow
Advances on victorious Gaul ;
Undaunted tho' their comrades fall !

Unshaken tho' their leader's low !
Fixed—as the high and buttressed mound,
That guards some leaguered city round,
They stand unmoved—behind them form
The flying fragments of the storm ;
While on their sheltering front, amain
France drives, with all her thundering train,
Her full career of death.

But drives in vain—for unimpressed,
The arm of havoc they arrest,
And from the foe's exulting crest,

Tear down the laurel wreath ;
Nor does the gallant foe resign
A tame inglorious prize ;
Long, long on Britain's rallied line
The deadly fire he plies ;

Long, long where Britain's banners shine,
 He vainly toils and dies !—
 Ne'er to a battle's fiercer groan
 Did mountain echoes roar,
 Nor ever evening blush upon
 A redder field of gore.
 But feebler now, and feebler still
 The panting French assail the hill,
 And weaker grows their cannon's roar,
 And thinner falls their musket shower,
 Fainter their clanging steel ;
 They shout, they charge, they stand no more —
 And staggering in the slippery gore,
 Their very leaders reel.

XX

But shooting high and rolling far,
 What new and horrid face of war
 Now flushes on the sight ?

'Tis France, as furious she retires,
That wrecks in desolating fires,

The vengeance of her flight.

The flames the grassy vale o'er-run,
Already parched by summer's sun ;
And sweeping turbid down the breeze
In clouds the arid thickets seize,
And climb the dry and withered trees

In flashes long and bright.

Oh ! 'twas a scene sublime and dire,
To see that billowy sea of fire,
Rolling its fierce and flakey flood
O'er cultured field and tangled wood,
And drowning in the flaming tide,
Autumn's hope and summer's pride.
From Talavera's wall and tower

And from the mountain's height,

Where they had stood for many an hour,

To view the varying fight,

Burghers and peasants in amaze

Behold their groves and vineyards blaze ;

Trembling they viewed the bloody fray,
 But little thought, ere close of day,
 That England's sigh and France's groan
 Should be re-echoed by their own !
 But ah ! far other cries than these
 Are wafted on the dismal breeze—
 Groans, not the wounded's lingering groan—
 Shrieks, not the shriek of death alone—
 But groan and shriek and horrid yell
 Of terror, torture, and despair,
 Such as 'twould freeze the tongue to tell,
 And chill the heart to hear,
 When to the very field of fight,
 Dreadful alike in sound and sight
 The conflagration spread,
 Involving in its fiery wave,
 The brave and reliques of the brave—
 The dying and the dead !

XXI.

And now again the evening sheds
 Her dewy veil on Teio's side,
 And from the Sierra's rocky heads,
 The giant shadows stride.
 And all is dim and dark again—
 Save here and there upon the plain,
 As if from funeral pyres,
 Casting a dull and flickering light
 Across the umbered face of night,
 Still flash the baleful fires,
 But since the close of yester-e'en
 How altered is the martial scene :
 Again, in night's surrounding veil,
 France moves her busy bands—but now
 She comes not, venturous, to assail
 The victors in their guarded vale,
 Or on the mountain's brow—
 Dash'd from her triumph's windy car
 She mourns the wayward fate of war,

And baffled and disheartened, o'er
 Alberche's stream, and from his shore,
 With silent haste she speeds,
 Nor dares, e'en at that midnight hour,
 To take the rest she needs ;
 Far from the tents where late she lay,
 Far from the field where late she fought,
 With rapid step and humbled thought,
 All night she holds her way :
 Leaving to Britain's conquering sons,
 Standards rent and ponderous guns,
 The trophies of the fray !
 The weak, the wounded, and the slain—
 The triumph of the battle plain—
 The glory of the day !

XXII.

I would not check the tender sigh,
 I would not chide the pious tear,
 That heaves the heart and dims the eye,
 When honoured friend and kinsman dear

Even upon victory's proudest bier,
Loved, lost, lamented, lie !

But I would say, for those that die

In honour's high career,

For those in glory's grave who sleep,

Weep fondly, but, exulting, weep !

The fairest wreath that fame can bind,

Is ever with the cypress twined ;

And fresher from th' untimely tomb

Renown's eternal laurels bloom ;

Fickle is fortune and unsure,

And worth and fame to be secure

Must be in death enshrined !

I too have known what 'tis to part

With the first inmate of my heart ;

To feel the bonds of nature riven,

To witness o'er the glowing dawn,

The spring of youth, the fire of heaven,

The grave's deep shadows drawn !

He slept not on the battle plain

The slumber of the brave—

Worn with disease, and racked with pain,

Far o'er th' Atlantic wave

He sought eluding health—in vain—

Health never lit his eye again,

He fills a foreign grave !

Oh, had he lived, his hand to-day

Had woven for the victor's brow,

Such chaplet as the enthusiast lay

Of genius may bestow ;

Or, since 'twas Heaven's severer doom

To call him to an early tomb ;

Would, Wellesley, would that he had died

Beneath thine eye and at thy side !

It would have lightened sorrow's load,

Had thy applause on him bestowed

The fame he loved in thee ;

And reared his honoured tomb beside

Those of the gallant hearts who died,

Their kinsmen's, friends', and country's pride,

In Talavera's victory.

NOTES.

STANZA II. 1. 2. *He of the borrowed crown.*

"The borrowed Majesty of England."

Shakspeare. King John

Joseph (el Rey botilla) was in the field, and of course nominally commanding in chief ; but he seems very prudently to have placed himself opposite to the Spanish lines, where there was little to do, and, accordingly, we do not hear of him again, till his gasconading proclamations from Saint Olalla, after his retreat.

St. III. 1. 1. *Thrice they come on.* I have taken the liberty of representing the three attacks on General Hill's position to have been all made about midnight, and in immediate succession, though, in fact, the first occurred late in the evening, the second only at midnight, and the third about day-break on the 28th.

St. III. 1. 8. *Peter's Holy Aisle.* The abbey church of Westminster, dedicated to St. Peter.

St. IV. 1. 1. *Promiscuous Death.* It is certain that in the confusion of the night fight, much loss was occasioned on both parts, by mistaking friends for foes.

St. IV. l. 16. *Fifty thousand muskets.* The French acknowledge to have had 45,000 men engaged, and we know that the effective British scarcely, if at all, exceeded 20,000.

* * Since these pages were first published, there have appeared in the *Moniteur* of Sept. 28, notes on Lord Wellington's dispatches, which admit the disparity to have been still greater than the most sanguine Englishman had thought, than even *we romancers* had imagined.

They state the army which attacked Lord Wellesley (as they call him) to have consisted of the 1st and 4th corps and the reserve; and the force of them is stated to have been,—the 1st corps, 36 battalions; the 4th, 30 battalions; and the reserve, 20 battalions, exclusive of the cavalry, which was 40 squadrons. Now these 86 battalions, if complete, would have numbered 86,000 infantry; and even if but *half* complete, would have more than doubled Lord Wellington's force (which they admit to be but 20,000), by 6,000 infantry alone, or reckoning the cavalry, by 10,000 men.

St. V. l. 14. *Thy agony of fame.* This expression, and another in the last line of the XVIIIth Stanza, are borrowed from a splendid passage of Mr. Burke's, in which, speaking of Lord Keppel, he says, "With what zeal and anxious affection I attended him through his trial, *that agony of his glory.*—with what prodigality I squandered myself in courting almost every sort of enmity for his sake;" &c. *Burke's Works*, v. 8. p. 54.

St. V. l. 20. *Faction's spite.* The calumniators of Sir Arthur Wellesley have been so industrious in publishing

their malignity, that it is unnecessary to recall to the public observation any particular instance of it. In reading their base absurdities, one cannot but recollect the expression of Marshal Villars (I think it was) to Lewis XIV. 'Sire, je vais combattre vos ennemis, & je vous laisse au milieu des miens.'—Sir Arthur, much worse treated than M. de Villars, says nothing about it, but beats his country's enemies, and despises his own.

St. IX. l. 1. *But, tyrant, thou...* With all the reluctance which one must feel, to charge with atrocious crimes, a man whose transcendent talents (not always ill employed) have raised him to the highest station and power that any human being ever attained, it is yet impossible to think of his cruel and unprovoked attack on the Spanish crown and people without indignation—without feeling, that Divine justice must charge to his account, all the ruin by fire, famine and the sword, which his unparalleled injustice has visited upon that unhappy country.

St. IX. l. 20. *D'Enghien leads the shadowy crew.* The seizing the Duke D'Enghien in a neutral state, dragging him to a tribunal to which he was, in no view, amenable, condemning him by laws to which he owed no obedience, and finally putting him to death by a hasty, timid and illegal execution by torch light, are stains on Bonaparte's character, of such violence, injustice and cruelty, as no good fortune, no talents, no splendour of power, or even of merit, can ever obliterate.

St. X. l. 8. *England and Spain still brave thy power.* The author has never ventured to indulge any very sanguine

hope of the final success of the Spanish cause, particularly since the retreat of the French from Madrid, and behind the Ebro, was turned to so little solid advantage by the Spaniards. But that their efforts and their example in a great degree crippled and distracted the power of France, and afforded a considerable chance for the emancipation of Europe; that the victories of Baylen and Talavera, the defence of Saragossa and Gerona have been of great advantage (exclusive of any other) in dissipating the spell of French invincibility, cannot be denied. Undoubtedly Bonaparte will come out of the Spanish contest, even though he should succeed in placing his brother on the throne, with diminished reputation and more precarious power. It is singular that in the succession war a century ago, the French were obliged in like manner to retire from Madrid behind the Ebro, and that the negligence of the other party, in not dislodging them from that position, eventually placed the French competitor on the throne of Spain. *See Carleton's Memoirs.*

St. XI. l. 17. *Ind's unequal war.* Sir Arthur Wellesley's campaign in India, was a masterpiece of courage and conduct. At Assaye on the third of September, 1803, with 2,000 Europeans and 2,500 Native Troops he utterly defeated the united armies of Scindia and the Rajah of Berar, amounting (exclusive of a body of 20,000 cavalry) to at least 11,000 infantry; strongly posted, furnished with a formidable and well served train of artillery, and officered in a great degree by French.

St. XIII. l. 12. *Wellesley undeceived.* The sagacity with which Sir A. Wellesley always foresaw the enemy's point of

attack, and prepared means of repelling it, were very remarkable. Those modest gentlemen in England, who undervalue his military abilities, are obliged (though unintentionally I dare say) to deny at the same time those of *their friends* the French, who admit that the English position was an excellent one, and obstinately defended: but indeed this admission was superfluous; for the perseverance with which they assailed it, sufficiently proves how important they thought it! And let it never be forgotten, that this position, five times at least attacked with more than double forces by some of the best generals and troops of France, was found to be impregnable. But what are the opinions of the French Marshals, or even the evidence of facts, to the speculations of the tacticians of Catherine Street, and the Strand?

St. XIII. l. 20. *Commanding height.* Had the French succeeded in carrying that height on which General Hill's brigade alone was at first posted, but towards which Sir Arthur afterwards moved several other regiments, nothing, it is thought, could have saved the British and Spanish armies from an entire defeat.

St. XIV. l. 1. *Three columns.* Many of the circumstances of this and the next Stanza are taken from an excellent letter from an officer of the 48th to his friend in Dublin, which was published in the Freeman's Journal, of that city, of the 19th August, 1809.

St. XV. l. 32. *Langworth, and Albuquerque and Payne.* General Baron Langworth (who fell gloriously) commanded the German cavalry. The duke of Albuquerque was of con-

siderable service with his corps of Spanish horse, and Generals Payne and Anson commanded the British cavalry. These troops brought off the remains of the 23d dragoons, who, in a charge headed by Colonel Seymour, had gotten entangled in a ravine and deep ditches, and were in danger of being entirely destroyed.—They behaved with great gallantry, but suffered a considerable loss, having however had the satisfaction of baffling Victor's (the duke of Belluno) attempt on General Hill's position.

St. XVI. l. 7. *Towards the centre.* The repulse of Victor by the dragoons, was followed by a general attack on the centre and right of the British line, which was every where gallantly repulsed; but the action was severest towards the left of the centre, where General Sherbrook commanded: it was there that the gallant impetuosity of the Guards for a moment endangered the victory, and with the description of this principal attack the text is chiefly occupied.

St. XVIII. l. 18. *The flowing tide of victory turned.* It is not to be denied, that at this moment the fate of the day was something worse than doubtful, but Sir Arthur, as soon as he saw the advance of the Guards, anticipated the result, and moved other troops (among the rest the 46th regiment) from the heights into the plain, to cover the retreat, which took place as he expected.

St. XVIII. l. last. *Squanders himself away.* See the note on Stanza V. l. 14. Towards the close of the action, Sir A. Wellesley was struck by two balls (but without injury) and two of his Aid-de-camps were wounded at his side. On this

occasion his personal exertions and peril seemed necessary to retrieve the victory.

St. XIX. 1. 2. *A gallant legion.* The 48th regiment, by whose coolness and courage (and both were severely tried) the Guards were enabled to form again. Col. Donellan was unfortunately severely wounded at the head of this gallant corps.

St. XX. 1. 5. *Desolating fires.* This circumstance is mentioned in private letters ; but not, that the French set fire to the field *designedly*;—it would rather seem that the accidental bursting of their shells in the dry grass occasioned this conflagration, which ravaged a great extent of ground, and entirely consumed many of the dead and (horrid to relate!) some of the wounded. This must have been a new and striking feature of war.

St. XXI. 1. 14. *France moves her busy bands.* Immediately after the repulse of their general attack, the French began to retire ; which they did in good order ; and during the night, effected their retreat towards Santa Olalla, leaving in the hands of the British 20 pieces of cannon, ammunition, tumbrils and prisoners.

St. XXII. 1. 8. *For those that die
In honour's high career.*

—I lament exceedingly that my plan and limits did not permit me to pay to some distinguished individuals who fell in this action, the tribute they deserved—but it is to be hoped, that the Country will show its sense of their glorious services and fall by a public monument.

FINIS.

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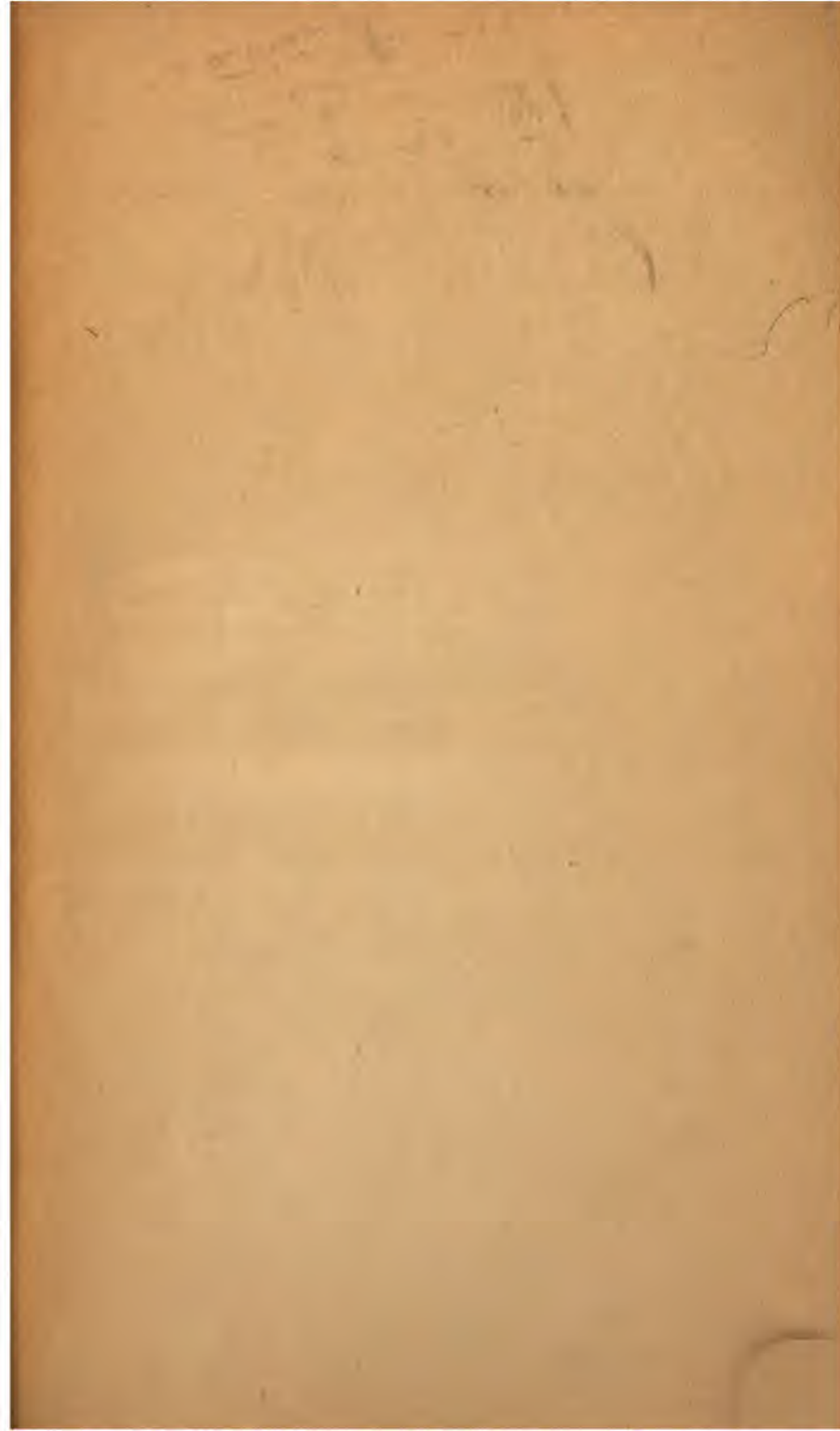
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